To improve its financial condition, Air India is taking steps to intensify marketing efforts, augment capacity, reduce non-operating costs and to improve its product, image and on time performance.

[Translation]

Pig Iron Plants

3088. SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the names of Pig iron plants operating in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar at present, separately;

(b) whether the Government propose to set up such more plants in public and private sectos in the above States;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) as per available information, pig iron units operating in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar are M/s. Malvika Steel Limited, M/s Nagpur Alloy Castings Limited and M/s. Usha Martin Industries Limited respectively.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Under the new industrial policy intrepreneurs are free to set up pig iron plants anywhere in the country subject to certain locational restrictions.

Increase in the Production Cost of Iron

3089. SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
SHRI SURENDRA YADAV :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn towards the newsitem published in '*Hindustan Times*' dated December 28, 1996 under caption "Mini Steel Plants on verge of closure";

(b) if so, whether due to recent price rise many small steel units in the country are on the verge of closure;

(c) if not, the reaction of the Government in this regard; and

(d) the estimated increase in the production cost of iron due to increase in prices of coal, petroleum products electricity and rail freight from December, 1995?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Cost of power is an important element in cost of production of steel through electric Arc Furnace and Induction furnace routes which are highly power intensive. Therefore, recent price hike in power tariffs by some States has affected the performance of these sectors.

(d) The increase in prices of Coal, petroleum products, electricity and rail freight from December, 1995 has increased the cost of production of pig iron and sponge iron in the country. However, it is difficult to estimate the impact on the cost of production as it depends on various factors such as the type of product, technology, location etc.

Telephone Connections in Bihar

3090. SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the gap between the demand and supply for new telephone connections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the biggest States of the country;

(b) whether the Government have set any target in this regard;

(c) if so, the details of steps being taken to achieve the target;

(d) whether the demand for new connection is increasing in these States; and

(e) if so, the steps being taken to meet this demand and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The demand and supply for new telephone connections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are given in the enclosed Statement.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Department has set targets for providing new telephone connections during the year 1996-97 :

Bihar	-	47000
Uttar Pradesh	-	155000

Also, it is proposed to clear the waiting list upto 31.3.97 progressively during 1997-98.

(c) Necessary equipments and funds for providing telephone lines have been allotted by the Government to all the Telecom Circles and the equipments have started reaching the sites. It is expected that the targets set for 1996-97 would be fully met. Action has been initiated for providing necessary equipments and materials for the year 1997-98.

(d) Yes, Sir. Demand growth rate has increased from 12.46% for the year 1994-95 to an average of 16.32 for the three years (94-97) for Bihar and from 14.62% to 18.77% for Uttar Pradesh during the same period.

(e) The objective to provide telephone connections on demand will be achieved with the participation of private sector complementing the efforts of the Government by the end of 9th Five Year Plan period.

Statement

State	Demand (as on)			Supply (Direct exchange lines (as on)		
	31.3.94	31.3.95	31.3.96	31.3.94	31.3.95	31.3.96
Bihar	238792	268541	322912	203248	247316	280431
Uttar Pradesh	667799	765420	928475	542303	658593	809929

[English]

Farakha Express

3091. SHRI RAM NAIK : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the Farakha Express leaving Patna at night is fast going a dubious reputation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there are complaints against the travelling ticket examiners and other Railways staff; and

(d) if so, the steps taken/ proposed to be taken by the government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) Four cases of robbery/dacoity from passengers in Farakha Express train have been reported during the last six months. Law and Order being a State subject, the cases have been registered with Government Railway Police/Bihar.

Twenty nine complaints against TTEs/Conductors of different mail/express trains on Eastern Railway have been received relating to malpractices/irregularities committed by TTEs/Conductors, Coach Attendants etc. In view of the seriousness of the complaints and as a result of confronted enquiries, 24 members of the staff have been punished under Discipline & Appeal Rules.

In addition, regular and special checks are being conducted jointly by Vigilance, Security and Commercial Departments to check such malpractices. 157 such checks have been conducted on Eastern Railway and 48 members of staff have been held responsible during the period from April'96 to January, '97.

Renovation of Bashirhat Telephone Exchange

3092. SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have not taken any positive action to change and renovate the existing telephone exchange of Bashirhat in 24 Parganas (North) West Bengal which is affecting adversely the services to telephone subscribers;

(b) whether the Government have also not taken action to connect the exchange with Calcutta telephones on a normal call charge;

(c) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(d) the remedial measures proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (d) Bashirhat 700 lines strowger MAX-II Exchange has already been replaced to 1400 lines C-DOT Electronic Exchange on 13.3.96 and is working satisfactorily. Bashirhat & Calcutta belong to two different *SDCAs and as per policy of the Government calls from Bashirhat to Calcutta are charged at Normal STD rates applicable for the distance between the two.

*SDCA : Short Distance Charging Areas.

Report on Air Collision at Charkhi Dadri

3093. DR. Y. S. RAJASEKHARA REDDY : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Court of Inquiry appointed by the Government for formal investigation of mid-air collision near Charkhi Dadri in Haryana on November 12, 1996 has submitted its report;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the recommendations made; and

(c) if not, the time by which the report is likely to be submitted?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The term of the Court of Inquiry has been extended upto 15th May, 1997. It is not possible to indicate the date by which the report is likely to be submitted, at this stage.